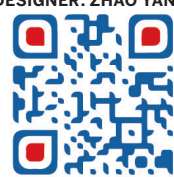


# BEIJING TODAY

## METRO



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## Chaos on three wheels

Sanbengzi, also known as auto rickshaws, are an essential part of Beijing's transportation network: even if they are illegal.

The occasionally dangerous vehicles carry commuters down "the last mile," the often several-kilometer stretch between where public transportation ends and where Beijingers reside.

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媒体监督热线: +86 (010) 6590 2515, [hr@beijingtoday.com.cn](mailto:hr@beijingtoday.com.cn)



# Housing fund faces the chopping block

By ZHAO HONGYI  
Beijing Today Staff

After 12 years of development, the government is considering putting an end to its mandatory joint housing fund.

Created with the goal of helping workers to become homeowners, the fund has become something of a joke as its rate of deposit and growth tumbles behind China's superheated housing market.

Housing was previously distributed for free to workers during China's first 30 years of Communist Party rule. However, the central government abruptly cut off housing distributions in 1998 and began urging workers to purchase homes on the open market.

The fund, created to assist workers during the transition, was championed by Premier Zhu Rongji. Zhu forced all businesses – irrespective of their ownership or structure – to participate in the fund by setting aside a portion of their employees' income and matching the contribution.

Money from the fund could only be withdrawn to buy an apartment or pay a mortgage.

But housing prices have increased more than six fold since 1998, and today's fund is rarely able to make a dent in one's first mortgage.



Critics say China's housing fund has lost its purpose.

CFP Photo

Money deposited in the fund grows at a fixed interest rate of 1.89 percent – 1.07 percent less than the CPI. More than 949 billion yuan was tied up in the housing fund as of this March, with most held in commercial banks.

The size of the deposits vary based on employee income and industry. They are typically between 1,000 and 5,000 yuan. In the power and banking industries, monthly deposits can exceed 40,000 yuan or 20 times the average.

While many workers would prefer to

see the fund reformed rather than canceled, that appears unlikely.

Chen Jie, vice director of the Property Research Center at Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, said reform efforts can easily be halted by any employer, employee, local government or supervising entity who disagrees with any change.

"The best case would be to see the housing fund turned into a second channel of income like the pension fund," said Shen Zhenchao, director of Shanghai Accumulation Fund Management Center.

# Bribery brings con men, cops together to 'spring' mafia man

By ZHAO HONGYI  
Beijing Today Staff

The arrest of a man surnamed Ma in Liaoning Province was the beginning of one of China's strangest stories involving the criminal underground, police bribery and impersonators of government officials.

When a man surnamed Ma was arrested for his connections to Liaoning's criminal underground and running an illegal mine, his father-in-law surnamed Liu turned to a friend in the local police for help.

That man, an officer surnamed Shi, put Liu in touch with two men in Beijing: Wang Rulai, 51, who worked for the Ministry of public security, and Xiao Hongming, 43, who worked for the Ministry of Justice.

The two said it would cost 3 million yuan to use their connections to intervene in Ma's case. Liu gave his account information to Shi, who said he would pass the money on to the officials.

Seven days later, after receiving no news, Liu called again and learned Ma's case was being transferred to the Supreme Procuratorate and Supreme Court. The

men in Beijing said they would need another 2 million yuan to intervene.

After a month of no progress, Shi said Ma's files had been closed and the prosecutors were preparing to discuss his case. It would be another 3 million yuan to buy their aid in freeing Ma.

Liu paid, but a month later the men wanted 5 million yuan. Liu asked to meet the officials before he would pay more.

In January 2011, Liu met Xiao Hongming and Wang Rulai at a cafe in Liuliqiao on the city's southwest side. The two again asked for 5 million yuan up front. Unwilling to bargain, Liu returned home.

Back in Liaoning Province, Liu told Shi he suspected the "officials" were just men posing as government employees and asked him to help him get his money back. Shi called Xiao and Wang, but the two said the case remained open and refused to return the money.

In April 2011, the local court of Benxi City found Ma guilty of all charges and sentenced him to 20 to years in prison.

Liu, finally certain that the men he paid were cons, went directly to the police. Xiao and Wang were arrested in August and November 2012.

During the trial, it was discovered Xiao and Wang were ex-convicts who met in Beijing in 2008 and began making a living by borrowing money and conning people by posing as officials. Neither maintained a fixed residence, and Wang had years of unpaid hotel bills.

The two shared a mutual acquaintance with Shi: a retired bureau director from the National Development and Reform Commission surnamed Liu.

Xiao asked Wang to cooperate with him and pose as an official from the Ministry of Justice. However, Wang said he had only been paid 320,000 yuan. A police search found 10,400 yuan in Xiao's home.

The court in Benxi, Liaoning Province sentenced Xiao to life imprisonment and Wang to 15 years imprisonment.

During the hearing, the court said they suspected Liu, the retired official, of having a role in the scam. Xiao's public defender said Liu took 100,000 yuan or more. It also noted that Shi is suspected of having taken some of his friend's money.

Liu is currently being treated for cancer while Shi is on business trip. The court said it would attempt to arrest the men once they return.

# Shichahai seeks grads for pedicabs

By ZHAO HONGYI  
Beijing Today Staff

Shichahai, the largest lake and tourist center in downtown Beijing, is seeking university graduates to operate its pedicab tours.

Positions are open to both male and female applicants and offer a monthly salary of 10,000 yuan.

New pedicab operators will be expected to be able to introduce the area's scenic sites and nightlife to foreign tourists, and to carry on the work of the "Eight Grandpas," a team of eight famous pedicab drivers who are fast approaching retirement.

In addition, they are expected to help clean up the pedicab business in Shichahai, which is plagued by drivers who frequently cheat their fares.

Lao Yu, one of the Eight Grandpas, said they have received more than a dozen resumes from both Chinese graduates and foreign residents.

Interviews will be later this month, and will include health and language tests. Those who are hired will receive an insurance package that covers retirement, accidents, pregnancy, unemployment and medicine, as well as a joint housing fund.

But in spite of the high pay and attractive insurance package, many university students seem to consider the work beneath them.

Of the 10 students that Beijing Today spoke to, only three were willing to consider the position.

"The purpose of studying in a university is to find job that makes use of your knowledge," said Ma Rui, a junior at Beijing Union University. "Working as a pedicab driver is less than I can accept."

But Gao Wei, secretary of the Beijing Folk Culture Association, said students misunderstand the career.

"Being a pedicab driver near Shichahai is not tiring work. The most important part of the job is being able to communicate with the foreign tourists," he said.



Shichahai hopes new drivers can clean up its pedicab image.

CFP Photo

# China's changing notion of family values

By YANG XIN

Beijing Today Staff

While China's culture is often characterized as "conservatives" by outsiders, modern Chinese society leans more toward *Sex and the City* than Confucius. In the current commercial era, marital infidelity has blossomed and given rise to bloody conflicts that break families and claim lives.



## Sad cases

A woman in Kunming, Yunnan Province, burned her husband's mistress to death on the evening of June 30. She later attempted to take her own life.

When speaking in her defense, the attacker blamed the other woman for "forcing her to divorce."

It's hardly the first extreme family tragedy to grace the pages of Chinese news. Last year, another woman was sentenced to prison for burning her husband's mistress to death in Taizhou, Zhejiang Province.

Wives are not the only culprits. Husbands have also been keen to engage in both abuse and murder.

On July 2, Lai Yicheng, the former chairman of the Shantou CPPCC, beat his mistress to death to "teach her a lesson" after several arguments.

Mistresses are exceedingly common in modern China. Marriage counselors say that more than half of their patients are working through problems related to extramarital affairs.

It's not limited to philandering hus-

bands either. Women are having more affairs too. The number of affairs initiated by women has more than doubled during the last decade.

Most discussions about mistresses rest the blame on China's materialistic trends. The director of one local marriage counseling company who refused to be named said that China's economically prosperous cities lead the nation in extramarital affairs.

A study published by the Crisis Management Center at Renmin University in 2013 found that 95 percent of Chinese officials who were investigated for corruption had paid for sex. As many as 60 percent were keeping a mistress.

## A symbol of power

Since the economic reforms of the 1980s, Chinese society has been infatuated with money and social status. Having a mistress is, to some extent, a symbol of status.

A Chinese social blogger who writes under the pen name Zhanyunjian said mistresses have replaced an earlier Chinese obsession with displaying wealth

through belts, watches and leather shoes.

"A mistress is an alternative expression of a man's fortune. Those who are rich but have no mistress are actually regarded as abnormal in modern Chinese society," Zhanyunjian said.

Mistresses themselves feel no shame about their social status. In 2011, there was already an official website and BBS run by the Chinese Mistress Care Association. The site gathered a considerable number of members who claimed to be mistresses.

Family ties are no longer a major binding force in Chinese society. For thousands of years, family values were bundled with a feudal moral code that was derived from Confucian ideals. Infidelity was considered to be humiliating and intolerable.

The Cultural Revolution changed all that. With the country free of traditional values, it entered its economic boom as a blank slate. Fortune and position were quick to replace early Confucian tradition.

"In China, I always see people elevating fortune and social position

while neglecting the family. The traditional appreciation of family value is on the verge of collapse," said Liu Jianmei, a professor at the University of Maryland.

With no substitute for family values to hold marriages together, extramarital affairs were free to become fashionable.

## Lesson from the Americas

In some ways, China's development has been like an accelerated version of the changing family blueprints seen in the US during the 20th century.

During the last 100 years, American families have witnessed a similar transition from a traditional family unit centered on the father to a more psychological notion of "family" focused on joint fulfillment. This eventually evolved into the modern forms of family, such as the single-parent family, the childless family, the broken family and the homosexual family.

While many demographers expect these forms to remain dominant in the US during the foreseeable future, sociologists point to a different trend.

Based on three decades of study and analysis of family life, sociologist Andrew J. Cherlin said that marriage in America has become more of an ideal than a reality.

"Americans have come to embrace two contradictory models of personal and family life: marriage, a formal commitment to share one's life with another; and individualism, which emphasizes personal growth and development," Cherlin said.

According to a survey conducted by the Russian news agency Pravda in 2009, 94 percent of Americans believe extramarital affair to be intolerable.

Barbara Dafeo Whitehead, head of American National Marriage Project, said Americans are putting a greater emphasis on spiritual partnership and child-rearing in marriage.

Whether China will experience a similar boomerang back to traditional values remains to be seen. Whatever pattern China finally lands on will have to be supported by socio-cultural ideas rather than appeals to the practices of antiquity.



CFP Photos



# Blending cultures in ink



Revisiting a Once Familiar Place, ink on paper, Li Bing



Landscape in the Eye of the Beholder, ink on paper, Liu Dan



Shadow, ink on paper, Pan Gongkai

## Q&A with Cai Xiaosong and Xu Bing

**Q:** What were you working in before you found your focus on Chinese ink?

**Cai Xiaosong:** I spent a lot of time analyzing art. From that experience, I started to rethink traditional ink painting. That gave me a lot of room to expand my artistic creation and develop a dialogue with my viewers.

**Xu Bing:** I used to focus on cultural exchanges. The works I submitted for the exhibition are based on what I was doing in school.

**Q:** How do you evaluate your own work?

**Cai Xiaosong:** My work, Planet, describes existence. Everyone understands the meaning, but existence has unique flavor when expressed in Chinese ink.

**Xu Bing:** My work, Revisit a Place Long Familiar With, shows the feelings we all have. It shows familiar grass, hills and sky. But when you carefully study the work, you can find some elements from the ancient Chinese ink painting that I've combined.

**Q:** What do you see in your future?

**Cai Xiaosong:** I will continue trying to develop my existing art.

**Xu Bing:** I'll continue try to communicate with the people from other cultures and to bring more modern elements into Chinese ink.

By **ZHAO HONGYI**

Beijing Today Staff

Asian Art Center is hosting a joint exhibition of modern Chinese ink artists who are experimenting with ancient styles. The collection provides a fresh look at the changing uses of Chinese ink in art today.

The 18 artists whose works are on exhibition use traditional media to tackle topics such as emerging multiculturalism and the gradual blending of traditional culture into contemporary pop.

Artists Liu Guosong and Pan Gongkai transitioned from the traditional to contemporary art. They explore Chinese ink using contemporary insights. Liu Guosong focuses on the materials and abstract language while Pan Gongkai focuses on the spiritual qualities of Chinese ink.

Gu Dawen and Xu Bing base their works on contemporary art perspectives. The two rethink traditional Chinese ink painting and explore the possibility of transcultural communication.

Cai Xiaosong, Liu Dan and Wang Tiande experiment with the symbols of ancient Chinese scholars that appear in paintings, such as gardens, ancient books and stone inscriptions.

Lan Zhenghui, Zheng Chongbing, Qin Feng and Wang Huangsheng focus on painting technique, creating splendid and rich images. Qiu Shude, Huang Zhiyang focus on blending colors to express abstract ideas.

Artists Liu Qinghe, Li Jin, Zhuwei and Pan Xinhua use Chinese ink to express their thoughts about daily life, often incorporating humor or self-mocking elements.

Xu Lei uses his detailed paintings to transform traditional symbols into something more modern.

"Some of the collaborating artists reflect the realization that Chinese ink paintings have once again become the trend," said Yin Shuangxi, curator of the joint exhibition and professor of the Central Academy of Fine Arts.

"Rather than overturning traditional art, their work reflects a contemporary trend to explore one's cultural and artistic roots. Their experimentation in Chinese painting reflects both their understanding and respect for millennia of cultural development," Yin said.

The exhibition displays the liveliness of contemporary ink painting against a backdrop of the global contemporary art development.

## Asia Art Center

**Where:** 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

**When:** Through August 10

**Tel:** 5978 9709 / 9710

**Duration:** July 5 to August 15



Planet



# Brushstrokes of memory

By ZHAO HONGYI

Beijing Today Staff

The lives of He Jinwei and Seung Lee may have taken different paths, but the two artists share a similar obsession with their childhood.

Both spent their early years in remote Asian villages and today create works dominated by profound nostalgia for those simpler times.

He lives in Beijing and Lee has left Korea behind for a New York studio and US citizenship, but both are sharing their past at Ovation Art Space this month.

Childhood photos meet Chinese ink and oil paints in He Jinwei's art. The blending strips away the context of the original image and project's He's childhood memories into a dreamy space.

Lee uses trees as an artistic element to recreate his memories and tell of his fortunes and misfortunes in oil paintings. His forested landscapes captures the image of the Asian countryside.

Themes such as common workers, classmates, friends and relatives dominate the childhood imagery in both their works.

Their works represent some of the latest developments in Chinese ink painting and how the ancient art is adapting to the cultural needs of today.



Grandma, ink on paper, He Jinwei

## Beijing Ovation Art Development

**Where:** D08 Warehouse, 11 East Street, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

**When:** Through July 31

**Tel:** 5762 6257

**Duration:** July 5 to July 30



et, ink on paper, Cai Xiaosong



Under the bridge, oil on canvas, He Jinwei



Church, ink on paper, He Jinwei



Childhood memory, oil on canvas, He Jinwei



# Commuters, traffic officials have tug of war over sanbengzi



Chaos caused by sanbengzi often leads to traffic jams and accidents.

By DIAO DIAO

Beijing Today Intern

Directions to someone's home in Beijing almost always include the phrase "Take a sanbengzi when you get off the subway."

Sanbengzi, also known as auto rickshaws, are the three-wheeled motorized cars that line up at popular subway exits.

The miniature vehicles, which carry two to four people and are typically used to run illegal taxi services, have been implicated in dozens of traffic accidents. A sanbengzi driver in Tianjin was killed in late 2013 when he collided with a truck while running a red light. In Beijing, one sanbengzi driver crashed into a car while driving against traffic on East Third Ring Road.

In addition to collisions, the boxy shape of sanbengzi make them especially prone to rollovers and other accidents.

But in spite of the danger, the cars remain wildly popular.

Sanbengzi fill a gaping hole in Beijing's transportation network. While the subway and bus system reaches many communities, the "last mile" – or three – is often completely unserved.

At Dalianpo Station on Line 6 of the subway, one passenger said he depends on the sanbengzi to take him the final two blocks to his home: a stretch free of public



The sanbengzi market is even bigger than the taxi market.

CFP Photos

buses run. "I come back from work late at night and it only costs me 5 yuan," he said.

Dalianpo is one of many stations that appear stranded from any business or residential areas. The McDonald's, which marks the start of the commercial area north of Beijing International Studies University, is 1 kilometer from the station. Only one public bus travels in that direction and it only comes at 30-minute intervals.

Wangjing's residential area is similarly isolated, with few buses heading that direction from the subway. While there are many buses at Dangwanglu Station

on Line 1, the nearest they can get to the area's international media and advertising complex still leaves travelers with a 10-minute walk.

While drivers were unwilling to discuss their earnings, most are estimated to earn more than 4,000 yuan per month if they run a sanbengzi in a busy area. Vehicles for the business cost between 3,000 and 5,000 yuan.

But the medical expenses for sanbengzi-related injuries can cost more than 10 times that sum. That's important to remember, given a test by the Tianjin Traf-

fic Bureau in 2013 found that the vehicles almost score a zero in their steadiness and ability to withstand a crash.

As sanbengzi are illegal vehicles, injuries sustained in their accidents are not covered by insurance. The Department of Traffic Management said motorized tricycles can only be legally used by disabled men and women who have been given an official certificate.

Attempts to regulate the use of sanbengzi or seize the vehicles have been ineffective due to the low price of a new car.

Shanghai has banned the refitting and sale of motorized tricycles to fight its sanbengzi problem. Henan Province responded by expanding its public transportation network.

Beijing has altered several bus lines and made a third attempt at deploying rentable bicycles, but both have little presence in the city's remote areas where sanbengzi remain dominant. The government's attempts to detain sanbengzi drivers and seize their cars has been similarly ineffective. Drivers can typically learn the patrol days in advance and simply avoid showing up for work.

"Even if they catch us, we just pay a few thousand yuan for 'punishment' and to get the car back," one driver said. "If we're really unlucky, they will keep the car."



Editor: Diao Diao

BEIJING TODAY

Designer: Zhao Yan



# Bikini choices for summer of sun

By DIAO DIAO  
Beijing Today Intern

Do you envy the actresses who are bold enough to wear sexy swimsuits? Don't hesitate to find a nice bikini design for yourself.

Bikinis are a major fashion symbol and one of the most popular clothing designs of the 20th century.

Although bikini-like designs can be found in some ancient artwork, the modern form was invented by French engineer Louis Reard in 1946. Named for the island and atoll where atomic bomb testing was underway, Reard's design had an explosive effect on European and American fashion.

The controversial bikini was slow to be accepted in Italy, Spain, America and Australia: its skimpy design was seen as an affront to modesty. The design found mass acceptance as more popular models, such as Marilyn Monroe, were photographed wearing them.

Of course, the less you wear, the more you will show.

A slim or toned physique is important if you want to wear a bikini. Your chest, arms, waist, hips and legs need to be tight. If you don't have muscle, at least make sure there is not much fat.

Just remember, the key point of wearing a bikini is to be confident even if you don't look that slim.

## Sports bikini

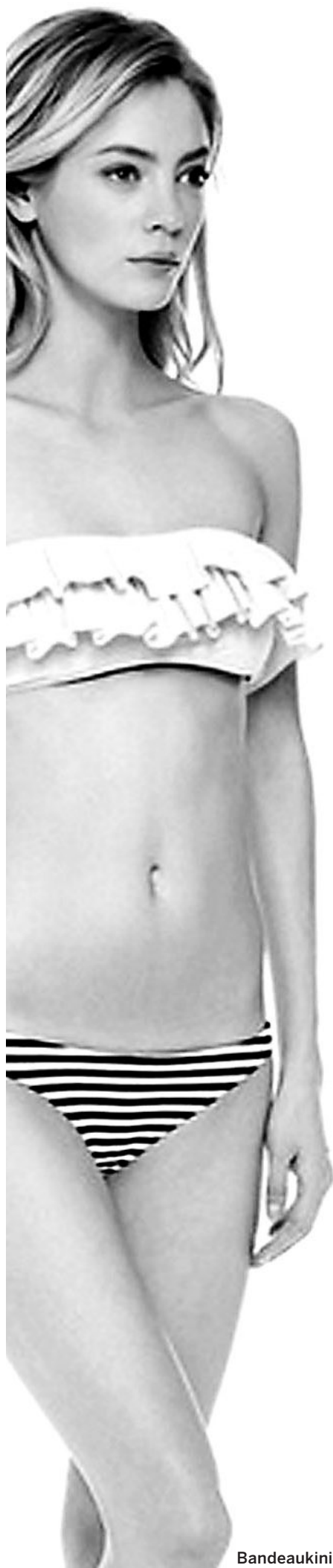
The sports bikini is less about sexy looks than function. Sports bikinis leave behind the low cuts and lace of other designs for a vest-like form that covers more of the upper body. The bikinis provide strong support for active women or the coverage needed to help plumper women to mask their weight. Most come in bright colors or fish patterns.

## Bandeaukini

These tube top-like bikinis are popular with younger rights. A bandeaukini with straps is safe for swimming or big movements while the smaller, strapless designs are more aimed at sun bathers. The strapless designs are great for women who are trying to avoid getting tan lines on their shoulders.

## Bikini suit

A "bikini suit" comes with a coat in addition to the usual pants and bra. The first kind of coat is a hollow, carved dress. It will protect from sun burns and create a sense of mystery. The second kind can be worn as a tee dress or a skirt and often has exaggerated patterns or icecream colors. There is also a separated design that resembles a short hoodie and miniskirt.



Bandeaukini

Photos by meilishuo.com



Bikini suit



Bikini suit



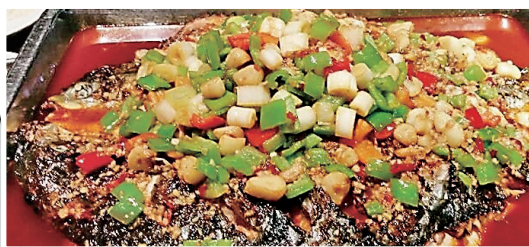
Sports bikinis



Designer: Zhao Yan



Dry pot



Roast fish flavored with hot bean paste



Spicy bullfrog

# Addicted to spice

By DIAO DIAO

Beijing Today Intern

If there is one complaint most people can agree on in regards to summer, it's the heat.

While many try to beat the heat by locking themselves up in an air conditioned room or sipping cold juice, a few actually chase after it.

But the search for sweat often begins at the dining table rather than a gym.

While most Beijingers don't care for spicy food, the local restaurant Lashangyin is extremely popular. The restaurant's name means something similar to "addicted to spice."

Lashangyin serves dry pot dishes, roast fish and other Sichuan specialties. It has eight chain locations throughout the capital's most populous neighborhoods. The restaurant is famous for using a variety of fragrant peppers in its cooking.

Most dishes can be prepared at any heat level between slightly spicy and extra spicy. Its hot bean paste flavored dishes are also popular.

The spicy main courses pair well with a chilly sweet and sour appetizer.

## Dry pot

The most popular dishes in Lashangyin are definitely its dry pots. Different meats, vegetables, seafood and other ingredients are combined in a big bowl and cooked with giant red peppers, smaller peppers and other seasonings.

It may seem simple to make, but the balance of smells and ingredients is very difficult to get right. Dry pots arrive bright red and covered in pepper oil. The more you eat, the more you want to eat. Color, smell and taste are the three essential elements of cooking, and dry pots have them all.

## Roast fish

Roast fish is another popular order. While China has no shortage of ways to prepare fish, Lashangyin's customers agree baked fish is the best. Customers can select from the fish menu to decide what they want to use. Catfish and carp are some of the more popular options. After selecting a fish, order several kinds of vegetables to cook with it.

## Cold dishes

Cold dishes are a must when eating spicy food. Juegenfen is a healthy option that looks like crystal gray noodles and tastes salty and sour. Blueberry yams are also sweet and sour.

Other common choices are lotus stuffed with sticky rice, jujubes, osmanthus and honey. Green bamboo shoots work as a great palate cleanser.

After dinner, cool off with a big jar of sweetened plum juice.



Lotus stuffed with sticky rice



Dry pot



Spicy roast fish



Blueberry yams

Photos by dianping.com

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Designer: Zhao Yan